



LOW HANGING FRUIT

Celebrate Banned Books Week

By Allison Floyd

A good library has something to offend everyone, as the saying goes, and that is a glorious reflection of the plurality of ideas championed by our libraries, our schools, and our democracy! In this spirit, every year, the American Library Association (ALA) celebrates Banned Books Week (Sept. 26—Oct. 2, 2021) in the last week of September. And we are here for it!



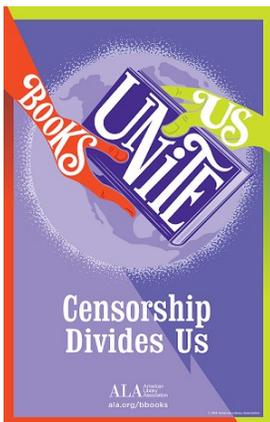
Launched in the 1980s, Banned Books Week draws attention to current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools (ALA, n.d.). By showcasing books that have been targeted for removal or restriction, Banned Books Week aims to draw national attention to the ongoing threat of censorship. The theme of this year's Banned Books Week is "Books Unite Us, Censorship Divides Us," and the ALA website offers free downloads, display ideas (which could be easily applied in classrooms!), suggestions for getting involved, and an extensive Q & A covering everything from navigating the perils of self-censorship (wherein a librarian or educator may avoid possibly polarizing materials and ideas in order to avoid controversy) to handling a book challenge (which could also apply to classroom-assigned reading and curricula). Check out the resources at [ALA's Banned Books Week website](https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/) to learn more about Banned Books Week, how to get involved, and how to make it last all year long!

Whether you choose to assign a banned book for your class to read, or use Banned Books Week as a jumping-off point to facilitate a rousing classroom discussion about intellectual freedom, here's to the free

and open exchange of ideas and information that makes our society great. And here's to your vital role as an educator in championing and preserving these freedoms!

ALA. (n.d.). *Banned Books Week* (September 26—October 2, 2021).

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/banned>



LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



Top 10 Banned Books of 2020

For a list of the 10 most challenged books of 2020, visit: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>

Consider pairing Constitution Day and Banned Books Week

Friday, September 17, 2021 is Constitution Day—an apt day to learn about the First Amendment.

<https://www.constitutionday.com/>

Book challenges come from all sides.

It's easy to pin the censorship blame on the other side, but challenges come from both sides of the political spectrum.

<https://www.dallasnews.com/>

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



Read a Banned Book

Here's a personal reading challenge: Find a banned book that you've not read and read it. What is the context in which the controversial elements are presented? Is there literary merit in the work? Does it present some difficult topics from which some readers might draw useful insight?

Lots of great literature deals with difficult questions. Some may argue that is part of what makes in great literature.

Here's a list for inspiration: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/decade2019>

DIGITAL TOOLS



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